

# Charlie *Kimball*

## KIMBALL PASSES A TESTING SPA

Charlie Kimball overcame multiple challenges this past weekend at the famous Spa-Francorchamps circuit in races 8 and 9 of the World Series by Renault. After a cut rear tire limited his Thursday testing pace to 21<sup>st</sup> place, Kimball rebounded in changeable conditions in qualifying 14<sup>th</sup> for Race 1 despite having his best lap compromised by traffic. Race 1 was another example of Kimball's fighting spirit as he overcame a first lap spin that dropped him to 26<sup>th</sup> place to race through the field and finish in an impressive 13<sup>th</sup> place. Race 2 saw Kimball storm up to 9<sup>th</sup> place in the opening laps of the race before being forced into retirement on lap 6 by a mechanical failure. While Kimball failed to score any Championship points, the lessons learned at Spa will strengthen the American's resolve for the rest of the season.



Testing at Spa before the weekend introduced a number of challenging situations as the session was interrupted by a major rain shower. Kimball lost further track time as he suffered a puncture to his right rear tire due to on-track debris. This cost him a new rear tire, complicating the program of developing the car set-up. As the field of 30 cars all began to run full sets of new tires, Kimball only had three quarters of a full set to use. This, coupled with an ill-timed red flag, meant that the American's best lap time was only good enough for 21<sup>st</sup>. Qualifying was also marked by a heavy rain shower in the minutes before the session which created another set of challenges for the World Series by Renault drivers and putting a critical emphasis on tire choice. After starting the session on wets, Kimball was one of the first drivers to gamble by running on slick tires. The gamble was heading for a big pay-off until another red flag gave the rest of the pit lane the opportunity to fit slicks as well. With time enough for only two quick laps, Kimball set about making the most of the limited remaining time. His first timed lap put him over a second quicker than anyone else in the session up to that point, but traffic on his second lap meant he was demoted to 7<sup>th</sup> in his group as 6 cars followed him across the line on the ever-drying circuit.

Kimball spoke after qualifying, "A session like that is challenging because it is hard to make the right call for tires. If it had stayed wet, I know I could have been in the top-3 of the group. Also with a clean second lap, I could have been a lot further up the order, but I am definitely within striking distance of the points paying top-ten positions."

Race 1 saw Kimball make a great start and avoid a first turn crash in which Miguel Molina vaulted over Alvaro Barba. The American had moved up to 12<sup>th</sup> by the first sector interval but as he defended his position into the Les Combes complex, he overestimated the grip of the cool rear tires and spun down the order to 26<sup>th</sup>. Rather than let his small error ruin the rest of his race, he set about making up as much ground as possible. Using pit stop strategy to maximize clear laps, coupled with a clean stop by his Victory Engineering pit crew, Kimball fought his way back up to finish in 13<sup>th</sup> position.

## Taking the American Dream to Victory Lane

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“It hurts a lot when a small mistake results in such a significant loss,” Kimball said afterwards. “I am really proud of the way I never gave up in the race after the spin and drove back through the field.”

Race 2 started out as promising as Race 1 with Kimball rocketing away from the line, in his best zero to 100 kilometer per hour start so far. Kimball’s advantage, however, was negated as he had to slow dramatically to avoid the spinning car of Bertrand Baguette at La Source, the first corner hairpin. This dropped him down to fifteenth, but by lap 2 he was up to 12, and by lap 4 he was in points paying position of 9<sup>th</sup>. As his car set-up began to get better, he started to close the gap to 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> places. However, on lap six as Kimball tried to downshift from sixth gear at the end of the long straight into Les Combes corner, the car wouldn’t change gear. After returning slowly to the pits, a hydraulic pump failure was shown to be to blame for the problem. Despite the best efforts of his pit crew, Kimball was unable to rejoin the race.

“It is extremely disappointing to lose points like that, especially after the weekend I’ve had,” Kimball said. “However, I have to be content with the fact that my racecraft was second to none this weekend and my speed in the car is improving significantly all the time.”

Kimball will now prepare for his ‘home’ race at the British circuit of Donington Park, September 7-8, 2007.

About Charlie Kimball:

Charlie Kimball is a successful young American racing driver forging a career in the highly competitive world of open wheel racing. He has spent the last few years racing in some of the most competitive racing categories in the world including British Formula 3, Formula 3 Euroseries and the World Series by Renault. The 2009 season sees Kimball returning to the United States as he challenges for the title in the Firestone Indy Lights Championship.

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